

## **Faculty Representative to the Board of Trustees Report January 2, 2024**

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In this report, I will discuss some of the criteria used when evaluating our faculty for tenure, promotion, or reappointment. But first, I would like to provide some thoughts on the concept of free speech on university campuses. Recently, there have been some high-profile news articles regarding campus protests over the Israel-Hamas war, including the resignation of President Elizabeth Magill and Board of Trustees Chair Scott Box at the University of Pennsylvania. While I will not comment on the conflict or protests specifically, they do provide a means of reflecting on our Clemson family and the core principles articulated in the “Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression” at the University of Chicago that were adopted by Clemson University last year. In discussions of pro-Israel or pro-Palestine support, which are so closely intertwined with many people’s personal ethos, it may be difficult if not impossible to objectively evaluate the discussion. Thus, statements from the University of Chicago report such as “...it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive” leave much room for interpretation. The report does clearly state that the University can limit language that is a genuine threat or harassment and thus can limit threats to the physical safety of any member of our community. The entire concept of free speech is amazingly complicated, and it is our role as a university to provide students with the tools they need to participate in open, critical, and respectful debates. A thought experiment I have personally used to help disentangle my personal biases in such discussions is to switch the topic or subject under debate with the alternate viewpoint. For example, if discussing gender discrimination of a female, mentally add a male in her place and see if it changes your feelings about the topic. It can be a very powerful exercise for personal reflection. Additionally, this exercise can help to distinguish cases where an individual or group is using events on a university campus to promote a political or societal issue which is not within the purview of the broader university. As we continue to grapple with concepts of freedom of speech and expression on university campuses nationwide, I am hopeful we can stay true to the core principles in the Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression and engage in a comprehensive, critical, and respectful dialogue.

For the remainder of this report, I would like to discuss our tenure, reappointment, and promotion processes specifically focusing on the types of materials faculty may submit with their applications. In previous reports, I have discussed the general process faculty follow when applying for tenure and promotion as well as the justification for having tenure, mostly related to the concepts of academic freedom and aiding our students in developing critical thinking and critical inquiry skills. For example, such skills are needed to engage in the discussions at the start of this report. As stated in our Faculty Manual “*Tenure is intended to enhance freedom in teaching, research, and other professional activities, and to provide the economic security required to sustain these freedoms.*” I offer the discussion that follows as a demonstration of the profoundly high-level of review in the application and evaluation process and to illustrate that we do not take awarding of tenure and promotion lightly. This is a remarkably rigorous process with multiple steps of evaluation and assessment of the candidates including reviews by the candidate’s department Tenure and Promotion Review (TPR) Committee, Department Chair, College Dean, the Provost, and the President.

In their application, candidates provide supporting documentation of their teaching, research, mentoring, and service activities (both internal for the University and external for professional organizations and outreach). Due to the large amount of material to be evaluated, the number of levels of evaluation, and the

importance of the decision, the evaluation period takes up most of the academic year. At this point in our yearly process, the faculty members have compiled their dossier and it has been evaluated by their departments TPR committee and department chair. In the past month, a letter has been written by both the committee and the chair making a recommendation to the Dean. Those letters include the chair and committee's evaluation and also take into consideration the evaluations from between 6 and 8 external reviewers. The Dean's will review all materials, seek consultation and recommendations from the college department chair and/or departmental TPR committee chairs, and make their own recommendation to the Provost and then ultimately the President.

A set of generic guidelines describing a range of materials that are to be submitted by a candidate seeking tenure and promotion is provided in Appendix A. All faculty are specifically evaluated on teaching, research, and service and as you can see by the listing of topics under each of these headings, the evaluation is extensive, and the faculty must demonstrate consistent and continuous success. For nearly all these criteria, we can link back to how that activity provided our students with opportunities to learn critical thinking skills which will prepare them for a lifetime of successful employment, active citizenship, and public service. Particularly in our increasingly connected world, our students and faculty must be capable of critically evaluating information coming from a remarkably wide range of sources and frequently deal with inherently complex questions, such as many public-policy questions, that do not necessarily have a "right" answer. The range of questions and answers our graduates will seek in their lives will vary widely but the critical thinking skills they will employ likely will not. Thus, the rigor of our tenure and promotion evaluations helps to ensure our faculty are delivering an optimal student experience, fulfilling our mission, and performing research on an R1 level or above.

As this Board of Trustees meeting is focused on the "Transform Lives" strategic pillar, I would like to specifically highlight some of the criteria used in evaluation of extension service. The educational and technical products of extension services can contribute to economic development, community health, and strong environmental stewardship. As our extension faculty reach every county in the state, they are in an ideal position to improve the lives of SC citizens. Some specific items that the extension faculty may provide to document this impact are:<sup>1</sup>

- Demonstrated capacity for developing, initiating, and directing effective extension programs.
- Developing, coordinating, or teaching in continuing education, professional development, and workshops, symposiums, short courses, training meetings, or commodity meetings.
- Educating the community by producing fact-sheet or web-based publications or hosting on-line education via webinars or social media
- Delivering presentations as requested on a state, regional, national, and international level
- Professional growth and development through educational meetings, workshops, and formal courses.
- Commendations by county agents and others who use the services of Extension specialists as an information resource and/or adoption and use of Extension educational products by other Extension personnel.

For many departments, it is convenient to describe research and educational impacts using a number of peer-reviewed papers, the number of graduates, or the amount of research funding acquired. While these are still important and considered criteria, the impacts of a peer-reviewed paper are difficult to assess on a local or state level. However, the potential for impact on economic and environmental health for each of

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<sup>1</sup>Summarized from review of the TPR guidelines in several departments; <https://www.clemson.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-senate/shared-governance/bylaws-tpr.html>

the bullet points above cannot be understated. Hence, these are critical criteria for many of our faculty seeking tenure and promotion.

As always, thank you for your time in service to Clemson University. Please note, my three-year team in this role will end this spring. Thus, time is running out for me to get you all to campus to visit with our faculty, staff, and students. Please call or email me to set up your visit ([bpowell@clemson.edu](mailto:bpowell@clemson.edu) or (864) 760-7685). Hopefully, my successor will continue this effort but that is not guaranteed.

## **Appendix A: Generic Departmental Guidelines for Tenure, Promotion and Reappointment (TPR)**

### 1. Criteria for Promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor and/or Granting Tenure

#### A. Teaching

- a. Development of courses or curricula.
- b. Clear and logical organization of course materials.
- c. Classroom observation and curriculum review by Teaching Mentors / Peers
- d. Demonstration of effective and well-organized delivery of lectures with appropriate depth for the class, and demonstration of mastery of the subject matter within the framework of current scientific knowledge.
- e. Positive interactions with students in the classroom and effective course administration.
- f. Demonstration of pedagogical improvement and/or innovation.
- g. Honors and awards based on teaching.

#### B. Research

- a. Establishment of independent research endeavors and reputation in the Candidate's research area as demonstrated in research direction, funding, publication, student training and professional responsibilities.
- b. Regular submissions of grant proposals outside the University and successful acquisition of significant external funding to support the Candidate's research.
- c. Publication of original research articles (beyond post-doctoral research) in peer review journals, book chapters, or other formats recognized by the scholar's community.
- d. Patents awarded and successful entrepreneurial pursuits
- e. Indication of successful mentoring of graduate students, undergraduate students, and/or other researchers in research and scholarship.
- f. Presentation of research seminars at another research institution or professional meeting.
- g. Honors and awards based on scholarly achievement.

#### C. Service

- a. Conscientious participation on Departmental or other committees.
- b. Active participation in professional service such as manuscript review, grant review, editorial service, and scientific organizations and meetings.
- c. Contribution to and cooperation with Departmental and University programs.
- d. Organizer/chair of professional meetings and workshops.
- e. Reviewer for funding agencies or for technical papers/manuscripts.
- f. Service to governmental agencies on policy issues, etc.
- g. Other service activities.

### 2. Procedures and Evaluation for Promotion from Assistant to Associate Professor and/or Granting Tenure

Letters that express the opinion of peers from the academic community outside Clemson University regarding the Candidate's research and scholarship will be requested for evaluation. The TPR committee will solicit an opinion from the external evaluators about the quality and impact of research and scholarship but will specifically not request an opinion as to whether the Candidate should be tenured or promoted. The evaluators must be apprised of the confidentiality procedures in effect at the time of the review. Other sources of information for evaluation of the Candidate's scholarship could include letters from faculty (or others) at Clemson University who have collaborated with the Candidate or who have special knowledge of their scholarship. Performance in research and scholarship is the primary focus of evaluation.

*Evaluation of Teaching.* The TPR Committee will examine a complete record of all courses taught. A successful Candidate will demonstrate clear evidence of teaching effectiveness. Specifically, the Candidate will submit a statement of teaching philosophy and materials representative of each course taught including a syllabus and summaries of the Clemson University Evaluation of Teaching (with departmental means, if applicable). Additional supporting materials may be supplied by the Candidate or requested by the Committee. Classroom visitations may be requested by the Candidate or used by the TPR Committee to provide further assessment of teaching effectiveness.

*Evaluation of Research.* A judgment by the committee will be made on the quality of research, as determined by support of research and dissemination of research results, including but not limited to record of publication, patent development, regular presentation of research findings at professional meetings, successful acquisition of external funding to support the Candidate's research and impact on their discipline. The Candidate's record since joining Clemson University as a tenure-track faculty will carry considerably more weight during evaluation. The Candidate will submit a statement of research that provides a narrative of their research program, objectives, activities, and achievements. The Candidate will also provide pdf reprints of publications that represent their contribution to the research field while at Clemson University. The weight research carries in the overall evaluation depends on the nature of the appointment and candidate's responsibilities in research and teaching.

*Evaluation of Service.* The Candidate will provide a statement of service that summarizes their professional and University service activities. The TPR Committee will evaluate the quality and impact of the Candidate's professional and University service activities. Such activities include service on Departmental, College, and University committees, as a grant or manuscript reviewer, as an editor, or in professional organizations.